1: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945) 1949 ND12 Nahane ND12

SOCIAL CULTURE

THE second major division of Kaska culture to be described, is derived from those ideas and activities which reflect the individual's adjustment to other individuals. In many situations such adjustment is essential for the execution of adaptive behaviors but it also represents the solution of additional problems arising out of interpersonal relations. Social culture has been divided into three subdivisions: interpersonal organization, ranging from the family to local groups; interpersonal relations in the larger society, including property, governmental, legal, sexual, and other relations between individuals; and those interpersonal relations entering into the lifecycle.

ORGANIZATION

Family

The nuclear family in Kaska society consists of a married couple and their true or adopted children. Such a group is sometimes augmented by the presence of additional relatives, as for example, an aged or widowed grandparent, an orphaned grandchild or the orphaned children of a mother's sister or father's brother. A family may also contain temporarily the unmarried siblings of either spouse. The Kaska family corresponds closely to the settlement described above in which the group occupies a single residence. If more than one family live in a settlement, they usually occupy separate dwellings.

Authority in the family is ideally invested in the husband, although actually the wife is consulted in all important considerations and may also originate action by influencing her husband's decisions. The authority of the husband is maintained even if the family happens to contain a grandparent. Although under conditions of matrilocal residence, a father may offer advice to his son-in-law, such advice is not given in an authoritative fashion and, once the marriage is established, does not dispute the authority of the husband. The importance of the father is also reflected in the fact that, despite the system of matrilineal succession, family names follow the patrilineal line.

Functionally the family is of great importance, constituting the primary economic unit of the society. It is able to provide its own capital goods and to exploit the environment in order to secure necessary consumer goods. Cooperation tends to be restricted to the family, but even here it cannot be demanded except from a young, unmarried son or daughter. A young married couple will generally trap together, but once children are born, the man will look to others for trapline companionship and assistance. Helpers secured in this way enter what may be described as a *prestige* relationship. That is, the partner is often a related or unrelated youth who is taught the art of trapping, freely loaned traps, and extended the privilege of using the trapping territory. Such a partnership is founded primarily on contiguity and is readily dissolved. Sometimes a family takes along a mature girl or young widow. The girl helps the wife in household duties, but may also hunt, using resources which are loaned her by the family with whom she resides. "They live on you. They get no money and live on you, helping till they get husband."

1: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945) 1949 ND12 Nahane ND12

Status of women. An adequate picture of the status of women in Kaska society must include consideration of several interdependent factors. These include the ideal attitudes of men regarding women, manifest behaviors of men toward women, and women's attitudes and behaviors toward men. 562 156

Ideally men recognize no intrinsic difference in intelligence between the sexes. On the other hand, by virtue of his activities, a man regards himself as superior to a woman. Because he traps and hunts, and through these activities supports a woman, he is "better" than she is. Old Man, who refused a direct answer to the question of which sex was superior, somewhat obliquely pointed out that a man who has lost his wife can be independent of a woman, making his own snowshoes, moccasins, and so on. Sexual antagonism of men is sometimes betrayed in derogatory remarks about women. Such remarks are: "He's just like woman," or "He's worse than woman." 562 183

Manifestly we find a woman to be economically dependent on a man although not necessarily on her husband. In marriage men perform the principal economic routines, supplying the household with most consumer and capital goods. It is interesting to note, however, that many men are reluctant to hunt or trap for long periods without the company of their wives. Old Man's statement that a widower can get along without a wife is belied by the events in his own life; he became emotionally upset, suicidal, and alcoholic following the death of his second wife and has been married three times. Such observations offer convincing proof of the fact that men are not content to live alone. Rather, a mature man's existence without a wife is sometimes characterized as "being hard time." Women, on the other hand, show a greater readiness to live independently and, as widows, do not show the eagerness to remarry which is revealed by men. A widow, perhaps with the aid of a daughter or sister, often becomes economically self-supporting, hunting moose and trapping as well as tending to female allocated duties. The woman's greater capacity for independence is probably related to the fact that men rarely do women's work, while as children women are in a position to learn many of the duties of the opposite sex and are better prepared to be self-sufficient. Matrilocal residence in marriage also operates to reduce both a woman's emotional and economic dependence on her husband. Finally, the status of women is further benefited by the fact that the society does not restrict a woman's activities by limiting them. Despite the fact that she may have several children, a woman will often move camp several times a year, accompany her husband traveling, and generally show no sign of being tied down or frustrated in a wide range of behavior. This freedom gives her opportunities to gain further knowledge of male allocated techniques and routines which may someday be useful and thereby lowers her degree of dependence. 562 155

We do not, however, find any pronounced reflection of a woman's potential independence and self-sufficiency in her marital relationship. Although in most families a wife is consulted before her husband makes any major decisions, there are few women who display dominant or matriarchal characteristics although sometimes a man's ineffectualness leads his wife to assume a firm command over family matters. Women generally reveal passive and compliant personalities and are willing to follow the lead of their husbands. 562 156

The expression of masculine striving in some girls seems to reflect a discontent with the less prestiged, more unexciting activities of women. Several such expressions were col- 562 157

1: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945) 1949 ND12 Nahane ND12

lected. Before her marriage, Paulette Donnelly is reported to have told her father: "I want to be like boy. I want to rustle, make little money." She didn't want children, feeling they were too much trouble, and inquired for contraceptive information. The spontaneous exclamation of Paulette, "I'm just as good as man!" when she one day killed a porcupine with an ax, is further evidence of the same trend. Another of Old Man's daughters was on her deathbed when she said to her father: "Don't try to save me. I'm no good to you. I can't break trail, I can't hunt, I'm only a girl."[33] In conversation women often speak rather boastfully of their exploits when hunting big game. Several women were reported to have attempted to induce sterility by magical means.[34]

To sum up the pertinent data reflecting the status of women, it can be said that the society enables the feminine sex to develop a considerable degree of independence and that such freedom is welcomed. The behavior of masculine striving is additional evidence of the woman's search for sexual equality. On the other hand, men's attitudes toward women and the marital relationship give women little opportunity to express independence, and force them to take a subsidiary role which is somewhat inferior to that patterned for men.

Old Age[35]

The Kaska define old age primarily by its biological correlates. Physically, as Old Man pointed out, "When people get old they get stiff and cramp everywhere. When they turn around, everything sore." General weakness and debility affect the body. Eyesight and hearing become impaired. As a man ages his hunting ability is one of the first things to decline. Stamina is drained off, "just like electricity." Louis Mam observed that when he was young he would go anywhere for moose. He kept on the move all the time, traveling all hours of the night. But now, at the age of thirty-seven, he is beginning to feel incapable of such exertion. The day after having indulged in too strenuous activity he wakes feeling unrefreshed and unrested. "You open your eye, feel you get up. No. Go back to sleep again. Old do that." Old age is also stated to be a time when very early experiences of an individual often vividly return to memory—"just like reading book."

Ideally old age is regarded as a period of wisdom derived from abundant experience. Old people are sometimes thought to possess strong supernatural power which has enabled them to hold on to life. Such idealization of age, however, is no obstacle to characterizing a clumsy or inept performance by assessing the actor as "like old man." In carrying old clothes, blankets, and other objects from the cabin which was to be occupied by the ethnographer, several girls began to chant: "Metla blanket," "Metla coat," and so on, for each hoary article which they brought out. The reference was to a partially senile old woman of

[33] Masculine striving was rewarded in aboriginal Kaska society at the expense of a woman's sexual satisfaction. A young girl, protected against conception by magical means, was brought up in the clothing and role of a boy, being trained to do a man's work. Her hunting ability was regarded as tied up with virginity, and she was expected to defend herself strongly against seduction. Slightly different patterns for assertive women to adopt man's roles (without, however, denying themselves sexual satisfaction) have been reported from Plains and other American Indian tribes. For a review of the literature see Steward, *Sex and the Social Order* (1946), 119-121.

[34] For details of such techniques see below, pp. 231-232.

[35] The collection of data for this section was considerably influenced by reference in the field to Simmons' *A Prospectus for Field-Research in the Position and Treatment of the Aged in Primitive and Other Societies* (1945).

1: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945) 1949 ND12 Nahane ND12

157 x 181 men are more in need of a women's emotional support than vice versa and women are socially encouraged to fulfill these expectations. Evidence also suggests that men seek what few secondary advantages accrue from illness, but that women are less required to resort to such techniques since their responsibilities are fewer.[46] Widowers, for the same reasons, are also far more emotionally upset upon the death of a spouse than widows, who often delay remarriage. In general, women's socially patterned roles permit them the satisfaction of dependency aims without strong conflict and partly for this reason they are less required to utilize passive receptive techniques like demanding, leeching, and hypochondriasis. They are also spared from the full burden of responsibilities which, in conjunction with a moderate ego development, often moves men to relax into passive forms of adaptation and adjustment.

157 x 181 ● 562 It has been pointed out that in a social setting enforcing unmitigated feminine dependence, passivity, and submission, we would find evidence of feminine masochism. Following this suggestion of Horney,[47] we watched for such expressions in Kaska women's behavior. We could collect no evidence of dysmenorrhea (here, however, observation was limited and not subject to careful checking), excessive concern with pregnancy and childbirth, or fears of exploitation determining women's fear of sexual relations. All these points listed by Horney are criteria of feminine masochism. While social expectations demand that to some degree Kaska women inhibit their interaction with men, women are not led to look for advantages as a result of regarding themselves as weak or helpless, nor are they predominantly self-sacrificing. Although the woman is economically dependent on the man, her husband is not the sole source of such satisfaction and economic dependence is not serviceable as a channel for woman's emotional dependence on the opposite sex. The absence of feminine masochism is further corroborated by the absence of other social conditions which Horney regards as predisposing to such attitudes. For example, manifestly, women are not discriminately blocked in finding outlets for sexuality before marriage; no cultural value is based on fertility, nor are limits placed on the number of children she can bear. The woman is not restricted to spheres of life built on an emotional basis, rather her ability determines the extent of her cultural participation. There is no surplus of marriageable women to favor their emotional dependence on men (if anything, the reverse is true). However, the male attitude regarding women as an inferior sex represents one condition listed as compatible with female masochistic feelings. Women's unconscious fear of aggression in coitus (to be discussed in the next section), may represent another such condition. On the whole the evidence does not suggest feminine masochism and supports our conclusion that Kaska women are not content to be swallowed in their socially patterned, passive role.

157 x 181 *Résumé.* The passive receptive goals of dependence have been outlined, together with an account of the conflict between this motivation and the motivations of egocentricity and

[46] Khatkhate has essayed to collect evidence pointing out that in many parts of the world either men or women "are somewhat neglected or occupy low status" and seek means of securing attention through bewitchment, trance states, and neurotic seizures (Khatkhate, *Navaho Witchcraft* [1944], 49). In Kaska society men, while not most neglected, feel their greater social burdens severely and this is one reason why they often seek attention through hypochondriasis.

[47] Horney, *The Problem of Feminine Masochism* (1935).

6: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945)1954 ND12 Nahane ND12
Upper Liard

was sororal in type. Even a widower had trouble securing permission to marry a woman other than his deceased's wife's sister, parents-in-law showing particular possessiveness about a man renowned as a hunter. To bring an unrelated woman into the family constituted a signal for the first wife to quit her husband and go home. No bride service attended marriage to a subsequent wife. Polyandry appears to have been restricted to old men who were unable to hunt sufficiently to support their families.[84] As the informant expressed it, "Sometimes a man cannot feed all the children of his wife. He then asks a brother to stay with him and trap with him and help him feed his family." The plan required the consent of the woman, who generally approved. "When the husband goes away and comes back his wife will tell him that his brother stayed with her. Then the husband knows he has help." The younger man continued to look after the widow when his co-husband died. Children of a polyandrous household belonged to the biological father, but it is not clear how the assignment was determined. Polyandrous marriages were frequently fraught with jealousy, but physical violence between the brothers never took place. As already pointed out, a junior husband never copulated with the woman while the senior husband was home. Some women remained unamenable to entering a polyandrous relationship. The husband's brother then "bothered" her until she consented. Very rarely a man invited some man other than a sibling to become a co-husband.

While women worked hard in marriage they did not perform a role inferior to the man's. A wife had much to say about running her home. The husband faced the responsibility of supplying her with meat and skins. She controlled food and dispensed hospitality, from which her husband in turn gained prestige. In folk tales we encounter the motif of a wife hoarding food while the husband starves. Does this mean that a man felt insecure in the face of his wife's household dominance?[85] The following story illustrates such a plot and perhaps reveals something of the relationship between brother, married sister, and sister's husband.

There was an old woman and her husband. The husband was starving, when one day his wife's brother came along. This man knew that his sister had bear meat. He met his brother-in-law and said, "Brother-in-law, you have game. We saw the head back there." The old man said he knew nothing about it. The woman hearing them became afraid and didn't know what to do. She cooked some bear meat in a spruce-root kettle but her brother refused to eat it. At night the latter said, "I thought you trust my brother-in-law right. You don't. I can't eat that meat. I'm going home." This man later spoke to his younger brother and said, "I don't think our sister will live much longer. I feel it. If anything happens to our sister don't think anything about it till we see our brother-in-law." They went away for seven days and upon their return discovered that the old woman had been killed. Her husband

[84] Polyandry, levirate, and sororate are reported for the Tlingit and Chilkat. Drucker, *Culture Element Distributions: XXV, Northwest Coast* (1950), 215-216.

[85] See also the story titled "The Blind Old Man" in Honigmann, *Culture and Ethos of Kaska Society* (1949), 227-228. We hear that "the mountain women have very little to say in the management of affairs. The Folly and Little Salmon are about even with the men in some cases the women being the boss entirely. In regards to camp work it depends entirely on what season of the year it is, if in fur season it keeps the men busy hunting and trapping and the women do practically all of the camp work. In the summer months they help each other. Field, *Unpublished manuscript* (1951), 16.